

## Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 5344

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PFOR PINS IS LE

SUBJ: ISRAELI VIEWS ON LEBANESE SITUATION

REF: A. STATE 185300 B. TEL AVIV A-136 C. BEIRUT 9973

1. SUMMARY. DRAWING ON MATERIAL IN RECENT BEIRUT CABLES WE HAD EXCHNAGE OF VIEWS ON LEBANESE SITUATION WITH MFA'S MIDDLE EAST DEPARTEMENT HEAD, VERED, ON AUGUST 13. THRUST OF VERED'S ANALYSIS WAS THAT ISRAELIS CONSIDER THAT SOME KIND OF EQUILIBRIUM HAS BEEN REESTABLISHED BETWEEN VARIOUS INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FORCES SEEKING TO DOMINATE LEBANON, AND THAT SUBJECT TO POSSIBILITY OF SUCCESSFUL OUTSIDE INTERVENTIONS, THIS SITUATION COULD CONTINUE FOR SOME TIME. DESPITE RECURRENT PROBLEM WITH LEBANESE-BASED  
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TERRORISTS, ISRAEL HAS MAJOR INTEREST IN CONTINUED LEBANESE INDEPENDENCE AND ISRAELIS ARE GRATIFIED THAT LEBANON HAS MANAGED TO HOLD TOGETHER AFTER WHAT WAS PROBABLY ITS WORSE CRISIS SINCE 1958. END SUMMARY.

2. VERED SAID ISRAELIS HAVE LEARNED ALWAYS TO LOOK AT LEBANON'S SITUATION WITH A VIEW TO EXTERNAL AS WELL AS INTERNAL FACTORS. STARTING WITH FORMER, VERED BELIEVES THAT THERE ARE SEVERAL COMMON FACTORS IN VIEWS OF OTHER ARAB STATES ABOUT LEBANON: THEY ALL WOULD LIKE TO SEE CHANGES IN LEBANON IN DIRECTION OF MOSLEM ASCENDANCY AND THEY WOULD ALL, EXCEPT JORDAN, AGREE ON DESIRABILITY OF "EXTRA-TERRITORIALITY" FOR PLO IN LEBANON. EVEN JORDAN, WHICH HAD FOUGHT PLO ON THIS ISSUE, HAS NOT TAKEN STRONG POSITION AGAINST PLO BASES IN LEBANON.

3. MOST DIRECT AND IMPORTANT EXTERNAL ARAB INFLUENCE IN LEBANON AT PRESENT WAS SYRIA, VERED SAID. IN LONG RUN, SYRIA SOUGHT TO INCREASE IT INFLUENCE IN LEBANON SO THAT SOMEDAY IT WOULD BE REINTEGRATED INTO A GREATER SYRIA. MORE IMMEDIATE SYRIAN OBJECTIVE WAS TO OBTAIN FACILITIES FOR STATIONING ADDITIONAL SYRIAN FORCES ON LEBANESE TERRITORY. VERED BELIEVES PURPOSE OF THIS IS TO INFLUENCE INTERNAL LEBANESE DEVELOPMENTS, NOT TO THREATEN ISRAEL. VERED MENTIONED THAT IN MOVING TOWARDS THIS OBJECTIVE, SYRIANS HAD BEEN WORKING HARD ON STRENGTHENING THEIR TIES WITH VARIOUS LEBANESE FACTORS. SHE GAVE AS EXAMPLE ALLEGED SYRIAN TALKS WITH SHIITE IMMAN MUSA SADR WHICH WOULD GIVE HIM ADDITIONAL AUTHORITY OVER CO-RELIGIONISTS IN SYRIA IN RETURN FOR ACQUIESCENCE IN AN AUGMENTED SYRIAN PRESENCE IN LEBANON.

4. GIVEN ITS LONG RANGE OBJECTIVES, SYRIA ALSO HAD A CONTINUED DESIRE TO LIMIT THE INFLUENCE OF OTHER ARAB STATES--PRINCIPALLY IRAQ AND LIBYA--IN LEBANON. IRAQ THROUGH BAATH PARTY AND ARAB IN LIBYA THROUGH ITS REJECTIONIST FRONT CONNECTIONS WERE BOTH STRIVING TO INCREASE THEIR INFLUENCE IN LEBANON. EGYPT, SAUDI ARABIA AND GULF STATES ALSO KEPT A HAND IN LEBANESE POLITICS TO ASSURE THAT THEIR INTERESTS COULD BE PROTECTED IF NEED BE. ISRAELIS  
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BELIEVE FOR EXAMPLE THAT EGYPT WOULD PROBABLY MAKE MAJOR EFFORT TO THWART SYRIANS IF LATTER APPEARED TO BE SUCCEEDING IN ESTABLISHING DOMINATION OVER LEBANESE GOVERNMENT. WHILE COMPETING OBJECTIVES OF ARAB STATES MEANT THAT THEY ALL ENGAGED ACTIVELY IN LEBANESE POLITICS, THIS ADDING ADDITIONAL UNCERTAIN FACTORS TO ALREADY COMPLICATED SITUATION, VERED THOUGH THIS COMPETITION ALSO CONTRIBUTED TO STABILITY IN THAT OPPOSING STATE INTERESTS OFTEN SEEMED TO RESULT IN AN EQUILIBRIUM, HOWEVER UNEASY.

5. TURNING TO LEBANESE INTERNAL SITUATION, VERED

THOUGHT THAT LEBANON'S CHRISTIANS WOULD BE ABLE TO RESIST MAJOR CHANGE IN "NATIONAL CHARTER" AND MAINTAIN STATUS QUO, THOUGH TRENDS WERE SURELY IN DIRECTION OF MORE POWER GOING TO MUSLIMS. SHE SAID SHE THOUGHT DRUZE COMMUNITY TENDED TO BE MORE AMBIVALENT ABOUT CHANGING "NATIONAL CHARTER" THAN JUMBLATT HIMSELF. QUESTION OF SOCIAL DIFFERENCES IN LEBANON, SHE SAID, WAS ALSO IMPORTANT IN DETERMINING ATTITUDES TOWARDS CHANGE IN STATUS QUO. FOR EXAMPLE, SOCIALIST AND LEFTIST FACTIONS IN PARTIES, PLO, DRUZE AND OTHER COMMUNITIES, TENDED TO APPEAL TO POORER CLASSES WHO NATURALLY WERE IN FAVOR OF CHANGE IN STATUS QUO. REVERSE SIDE OF THIS COIN WAS THAT MIDDLE CLASS AND WEALTHIER SEGMENTS IN ALL COMMUNITIES HAD DOUBTS ABOUT WHERE THIS WOULD LEAD. MANY MUSLIMS WHO OTHERWISE MIGHT FAVOR CHANGES LEADING IN DIRECTION OF MUSLIM ASCENDANCY WERE SKEPTICAL ABOUT DESIRABILITY OF RADICAL MOVES NOW BECAUSE OF CONCERN FOR LEBANON'S ULTIMATE SOVEREIGNTY.

6. IN COMMENTING ON SEVERE DISTURBANCES THIS SPRING AND SUMMER, VERED SAID THAT LEBANON'S CHRISTIANS HAD A CURIOUSLY LAISSEZ-FAIRE ATTITUDE UNTIL THEY REALLY BECAME CONVINCED THAT POWER WAS GOING TO BE TAKEN FROM THEM. THEN THEY STOOD UP AND FOUGHT. THEY HAD DONE SO IN 1958 AND SHE THOUGHT THEY PROBABLY WOULD DO SO AGAIN DESPITE FACT THAT TRENDS WERE AGAINST THEM. SHE THOUGHT THAT 1976 WOULD BE A PARTICULARLY BLOODY CONFIDENTIAL

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YEAR BECAUSE OF ELECTIONS, THOUGH NOT NECESSARILY WORSE THAN 1975.

7. IN DISCUSSING ACTIVITIES OF PLO FORCES IN LEBANON, MRS. VERED NOTED THAT THEY WERE INCREASING IN NUMBER (COMING MAINLY FROM SYRIA). ISRAEL BELIEVED THAT OBJECTIVE OF RECENT PLO VIOLENCE WAS TO MAKE GOAL OF REACHING INTERM EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI INTERM AGREEMENT AS DIFFICULT AS POSSIBLE FOR MODERATES ON BOTH SIDES.

8. ISSUE OF ISRAELI RETALIATORY ACTIONS AGAINST TARGETS IN LEBANON WAS ALSO DISCUSSED, AND WE MENTIONED TENOR OF COMMENT IN BEIRUT'S 9973. VERED GAVE FAMILIAR DEFENSE OF ISRAELI POLICY ON RETALIATION, SHE SAID THAT NOT ONLY HAD "SURGEON NOT LOST HIS TOUCH" BUT THAT ISRAELIS WERE EXTREMELY SATISFIED THAT THEIR RECENT STRIKES IN LEBANON HAD REMOVED VERY IMPORTANT TERRORIST INSTALLATIONS, THOUGH NATURALLY ISRAELIS SAW LOSS OF LIVES OF INNOCENTS AS TRAGEDY.

9. COMMENT: VERED'S PROGNOSIS OF LEBANON'S FUTURE SHOULD NOT BE READ AS SANGUINE; SHE SEEMED

RATHER TO BE MAKING CASE THAT LEBANON'S MANY TROUBLES  
HAVE NOT NECESSARILY SPELLED DOOM. THIS POSITION  
ALSO IS CONVENIENT FOR ISRAL, GIVEN ARGUMENT THAT  
HER RETALIATORY ACTIONS COULD PROVE TO BE STRAW THAT  
BREAKS LEBANESE CAMEL'S BACK. WE ALSO NOTE THAT VERED  
WAS NOT EMPHASIZING AS MUCH AS ISRAELIS SOMETIMES  
HAVE BEFORE VIEW THAT SYRIAN FORCES IN LEBANON  
(SAIQA AND OTHER) ARE THERE MAINLY TO THREATEN ISRAEL,  
INSTEAD, SHE STRESSED INTER-ARAB FACTORS AS MAIN REASON FOR  
SYRIAN EFFORTS TO AUGMENT THEIR PRESENCE.  
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